



ICYE

REASONS WHY ICYE IS NOT OFFERING VOLUNTEERING IN ORPHANAGE

www.icye.org



About orphanages

The term orphanage generally refers to institutional or residential care where children live together on a permanent basis and are provided care and protection by paid staff members in a non-family-based environment.

Volunteering in orphanages and residential care is still very popular among young people. Even though based on good intentions, sexual exploitation of children in orphanages is often linked to people getting access to the victims, also through volunteering. (ECPAT 2019)

Many orphanages have started to actively recruit children to fill the demand of volunteers who want to engage in this social work. At the same time, "placing a child in residential care is four times more expensive than family-based care alternatives." (ECPAT 2019)

80% of children in orphanages have living relatives

The Code

"Every child and young person should live in a supportive, protective and caring environment that promotes his/her full potential."

UN Guidelines

Reasons why volunteering in orphanages is harmful



1 Orphanage volunteering is contributing to a global industry that is separating children from their families

In the last decade, volunteering in orphanages - mostly in the Global South - has been growing. Even though 80% of children still have living relatives who could be supported to care for them, orphanages are considered a viable business opportunity, with children actively being recruited to fill the demand.

2 The practice of orphanage volunteering poses huge child protection risks

Volunteering in orphanages is negatively affecting the well-being of children. Orphanages show higher levels of violence and neglect and increase children's risk to experience abuse and exploitation. In many countries, the State is not sufficiently supervising and monitoring orphanages, nor are appropriate child protection systems in place by the institutions themselves.

3 Orphanage volunteering contributes to attachment disorder

Growing up in an orphanage can lead to attachment disorder, as volunteers often only stay for a few weeks or months and mostly don't have the required skills to work with vulnerable and possibly traumatised children. This can intensify children's feelings of abandonment and loss and makes it more difficult for them to build emotionally healthy human connections.



Alternative volunteering opportunities

For ICYE the wellbeing of children is in the centre of our safeguarding work. Volunteers who want to engage in social work with children can do so in many other ways.

ICYE offers opportunities in kindergardens or primary schools. There are volunteering opportunities addressing children's rights and their social development. Volunteers can engage with organisations that work with street children or against child labor or those that provide alternative education and social opportunities for children at risk. We cooperate with projects providing learning spaces for children based on art to promote social and personal transformation and those that promote education through sports and physical activities. Specific volunteering activities could e.g. include supporting with after school activities, carrying out playful and pedagogical activities with children, organising recreational workshops, community events and community dialogues or assisting the local staff in their outreach program on child protection.

Want to know more about our commitment to safeguard children?

Find our Policy "Care to Engage" at <https://www.icye.org/policies-and-annual-reports/>

SOURCES

- Ecpat, 26th of August 2019: <https://ecpat.org/voluntourism-orphanage-tourism-sexual-abuse/>
- Rethink Orphanages, https://rethinkorphanages.org/rethinkorphanages.org/problem-with-orphanage-tourism_volunteering
- Putting children first: <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Putting-Children-First-Endorsers-Document-FINAL.pdf>
- The Code, 7th of April 2019: <https://thecode.org/voluntourism-orphanages-child-sexual-exploitation-the-connection/>
- UN, 24.02.2010: UN's Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children